



**March 11, 2015**

**Testimony in support of Proposed H.B. No. 6275 AN ACT CONCERNING  
CERTIFICATION OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS**

**Amy Mongillo, President, Connecticut Dental Hygienists Association**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Amy Mongillo, President of the Connecticut Dental Hygienists' Association, Inc. CDHA. I am testifying in support of Proposed **H.B. No. 6275, AN ACT CONCERNING CERTIFICATION OF ADVANCED DENTAL HYGIENE PRACTITIONERS.**

The Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner (ADHP) or mid-level dental hygiene provider will practice in a public health setting to provide access to care. The mid-level provider will complete a Master's degree program building on the education and skills of the licensed registered dental hygienist. The ADHP will only perform procedures identified in the legislation for which they have been educated and trained in collaboration with a dentist. More complex procedures will be referred. It is expected that applicants will be issued a certification or endorsement to their current dental hygiene license. This concept has been studied previously in 2011 as part of the Scope of Practice Review process.

The expansion of Medicaid and the increase in insured children under the Affordable Care Act has increased the demand for care at the same time that a decrease in dental providers is predicted. Many adults in Connecticut do not have dental insurance. Key findings from a 2013 Department of Public Health study of vulnerable older adults indicated that many of our elderly are not getting the oral health care they need. And the overwhelming response from the public to the annual Mission of Mercy, which provides free dental services over two days, is evidence that the access problem is yet to be solved.

Implementing a dental hygiene midlevel provider, such as an ADHP, will increase access to dental care and ensure that Connecticut has the necessary work force to care for its residents. Care provided in public health settings: schools, community clinics and healthcare facilities improves access by reducing the barriers that many people experience such as finances, transportation and time away from school and work.

High standards of practice are maintained as public health dental clinics are regulated through licensing by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and abide by approved policies and procedures. Regular quality assurance reviews ensure consistent practice and standards of care. Patient needs are met through the use of multidisciplinary teams and collaboration with non-dental providers such as school nurses, nurse practitioners, social workers and physicians. Programs in public health settings are able to ensure continuity and completion of treatment by providing convenient access and are responsible for delivering culturally competent care.

Expanding the scope of practice for dental hygienists to include secondary prevention in the form of limited treatment services would decrease the likelihood of patients needing expensive and possibly life threatening emergency care, thereby saving money and improving health outcomes. Costs would be controlled by providing treatment sooner by a qualified health care mid-level dental hygiene provider.

Nationally, there is support for the expansion of midlevel dental hygiene providers. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Institute of Medicine and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services have looked at workforce development, expansion of scope and re-imburement of mid-level providers as strategies to address oral health care for vulnerable and underserved populations. In the face of spiraling costs, and demands to increase accountability with diminishing budgets, there is pressure on government agencies to assure cost effective measures for maintaining the public's health.

Two foundations concerned with children's health issues have been at the forefront of the discussion about mid-level dental providers: the Pew Center on the States, a division of the Pew Charitable Trusts, and the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Both have funded many studies on the lack of oral health care for the underserved and have shown a strong interest in creating a mid-level dental hygiene provider as a solution. The body of work and opinions generated from groups such as these who advocate on behalf of children are important for directing the discussion away from turf protection and toward advancing the public's health.

The addition of the language for Advanced Dental Hygiene Practitioner is important for expanding access to care for all residents of Connecticut. It builds on a familiar, rigorously educated, and licensed professional who could expand the continuum of care in community settings. We support working as part of an interdisciplinary health care team collaborating with dentists, dental hygienists, dental assistants and other health care professionals to treat patients and deliver quality care. The ADHP will encourage professionals to continue their education, seek professional development and advancement, and it will promote job growth in the health care field.

I am asking for your support of H.B. 6275. Thank you for your time, consideration and interest in oral health.

## Reference

Connecticut Department of Health (2013). The oral health of vulnerable older adults in Connecticut. Connecticut Department of Health, Office of Oral Health. Retrieved from [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/oral\\_health/pdf/vulnerable\\_adult\\_oral\\_health\\_report.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/oral_health/pdf/vulnerable_adult_oral_health_report.pdf)